

ABSTRACT

A novel method and apparatus for protection of streamed media content is disclosed. In one aspect, the apparatus includes control means for governance of content streams or content objects, decryption means for decrypting content streams or content objects under control of the control means, and feedback means for tracking actual use of content streams or content objects. The control means may operate in accordance with rules received as part of the streamed content, or through a side-band channel. The rules may specify allowed uses of the content, including whether or not the content can be copied or transferred, and whether and under what circumstances received content may be “checked out” of one device and used in a second device. The rules may also include or specify budgets, and a requirement that audit information be collected and/or transmitted to an external server. In a different aspect, the apparatus may include a media player designed to call plugins to assist in rendering content. A “trust plugin” is disclosed, along with a method of using the trust plugin so that a media player designed for use with unprotected content may render protected content without the necessity of requiring any changes to the media player. In one aspect, the streamed content may be in a number of different formats, including MPEG-4, MP3, and the RMFF format.